CLIMATE

132 This region has a wide range of temperatures through the seasons. During the four-month long winter the temperature sometimes reaches -18°C (0°F).

Dust storms added to the intense cold make outdoor life virtually impossible. The rivers freeze by the middle of October and often remain frozen until the following March. In summer, the relentless sun beating down from a cloudless sky for days in succession often builds up the temperature to over 30°C (86°F) and even 38°C (100°F) is not a rarity. This climate is shared by both the western half of the region, which is of the "cold steppe dry winter" type and the eastern half which falls within the "cool, dry winter" category.[8]

In good years, rain brings to this region an average of 500 millimeters (20 in.) of precipitation per year, usually falling in July and August, which constitute the local planting season. The southern portion, in comparison, gets a little more rain. Often, however, rainfall either exceeds or fails to reach this level; the result has been frequent years of drought or flood. The fluctuation is so great that it causes the farmers to trust their fate to heaven which they traditionally placate by erecting numerous little temples.

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[8] Ch'u Shao-t'ang, op. cit., p. 37; Cressey, op. cit., p. 162.